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European
Sociological
Association

13th Conference of the European Sociological Association

(Un)Making Europe: Capitalism, Solidarities, Subjectivities
Athens, Greece, 29 Aug. - 01 Sept. 2017

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Conference Time: 01/Sep/2017 7:27:44 pm CET

Conference Agenda

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Session Overview

Session

RN32_07a_P: Radical Right-wing Populist Parties in Comparative Perspective II

Time: Thursday, 31/Aug/2017: 4:00pm - 5:30pm

Session Chair: Carlo Ruzza, University of Trento

Location: PD.2.33

PANTEION University of Social & Political Sciences 136 Syggrou Avenue 17671 Athens, Greece Building: D, Level: 2.

Presentations

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Populist Constitutionalism in Europe: Anti-Constitutional or Popular-Constitutional?

Paul Blokker

Charles University, Czech Republic

Populist parties are increasingly part of European governments and wield governing power. One particularly significant dimension of this is populists reforming domestic constitutions or even adopting a wholly new one (Hungary). Populists ordinarily claim to represent the ordinary people and to promote their interests. It is not surprising therefore that in populist constitutionalism "the people" is a central dimension. Populist constitutionalism is increasingly upfront in the constitutional developments in countries such as Hungary and Poland, causing significant tensions in a European Union that endorses as its fundamental values democracy and the rule of law. The populist-constitutional phenomenon spawns debates on both democratic backsliding and illiberal democracy in Europe and on the supranational monitoring of democracy. At the same time, there are good indications that one can also find important manifestations of populist constitutionalism elsewhere, including in so-called established democracies, but in a more implicit and less upfront manner than in a case such as Hungary. The paper will attempt to start conceptualizing populist constitutionalism in a more systematic way than has been done so far. While there is some literature emerging on the phenomenon (Mudde 2013; Thio 2012; Mueller 2016), a more robust and theoretical treatment of populist constitutionalism still seems absent. The paper will provide a first step towards such an attempt by 'deconstructing' the phenomenon in a number of (interrelated) dimensions - the will of the People, majoritarianism, legal resentment, and constitutional instrumentalism - while relating the theoretical discussion to empirical case-studies.

The Appeal of the Islamic Conservative Populism of the AKP

Hayriye Ozen

Atilim University, Turkey

Most of the existing studies on populism deal with a certain type of right-wing populism, particularly the nationalist and anti-immigration populism. This study focuses on a different type of right-wing populism: the Islamic conservative populism of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has been in the rule in Turkey since 2002. Specifically, it tries to understand how the Islamic conservative populism of the AKP appealed to diverse groups including those who do not have religious demands. In examining this distinct form of right-wing populism, the study draws on the perspective developed by Ernesto Laclau and the Essex School which conceptualizes populism not as contents of politics but as a particular logic of articulation that symbolically divides the social field into two antagonistic camps by interpellating 'the people' against 'the power' or 'common enemy'. It is demonstrated that the elitist tendencies that long characterized the Turkish politics provided a fertile ground for the AKP to present itself as the voice of the people, which was discursively constructed as not only those with religious demands, but all those who feel excluded from the enjoyment of political rights and socio-economic benefits by the elites in power. Although this relatively inclusionary populism gradually turned into an exclusionary and authoritarian one, it still appealed to many social groups, particularly to those who won new rights and acquired new socio-economic benefits during the rule of the AKP, by reconstructing the category of 'the power' as well as the antagonistic relation between the people and the power in different ways. This study implies that populist parties may reproduce their appeal by reconstructing the people and the power categories in different ways.

The European Commission against the rising right-wing populism: are EU values and principles put into action?

Milica Pejovic

University of Trento, Italy

The refugee crisis, together with the Eurozone crisis, has been often framed in the public discourse as existential for the future of the European Union as it has brought into question the viability of the Schengen system, one of the core EU achievements. It has also challenged the concept of solidarity between member states as a few of them refused the proposal of the Commission to redistribute refugees in order to ensure a more equitable and fair solution for the massive influx of people from Middle Eastern war zones. Moreover, the refugee crisis has spurred xenophobia and right-wing populism in various member states as most of refugees have been Muslims. Already existing stereotypes and prejudices towards Muslims have been seriously exacerbated due to recent terrorist attacks and the rise of the Islamic state. However, the anti-immigration discourse of national populist politicians has been in a stark contrast to the discourse of the Commission, which has always prompted a pro-refugee agenda and stressed the importance of solidarity, tolerance and a common approach to the crisis. Against this background, the aim of the proposed paper is to examine how the Commission has reacted to the rise of extreme right-wing populism and hate speech in the context of unprecedented migratory pressures. Using interviews with civil servants working for the Commission, the proposed paper seeks to find out what practical measures have been undertaken in order to tackle the issue of populist hate speech at the national level and whether and how the Commission involved national and EU level CSOs in this process, having in mind that many of these organizations primarily fight against discrimination.

How to explain the rise and fall of ethnocentrism in Belgium between 1981 and 2009? Tracing the structural and cultural embeddedness of ethnocentrism

Ronan Van Rossem, Henk Roose

Universiteit Gent, Belgium

Objectives

The 1991 parliamentary elections in Belgium not only brought a major victory for the extreme right and racist Vlaams Blok but also that ethnocentrism became a central issue in Belgian politics. In this paper we trace (1) the evolution of ethnocentrism and (2) its structural and cultural embeddedness in Belgium.

Methods

For this purpose we make use of four consecutive waves of the European Values Survey (1991, 1990, 1999 & 2009). Confirmatory factor analysis, analysis of variance and regression tree analysis are used to analyze the data.

Results

We observe that ethnocentrism reached a peak during the 1990s and declined in the early 21st century, and that overall it is more prevalent in Flanders than in Brussels or Wallonia. Although the results regarding the structural embeddedness of ethnocentrism are consistent with the literature, the effects of structural variables, of which educational level and age are the most important, are too weak to really provide an explanation for the evolution in ethnocentrism. The association with cultural attitudes is weak as well and ethnocentrism shifts over time from being linked to a conservative socioeconomic attitude to being associated with institutional distrust and ethnical conservatism.

Conclusions

Our findings suggest that traditional structural and cultural models are insufficient to explain ethnocentrism in Belgium, and that for an explanation one may have to look at micro-sociological and social-psychological mechanisms.

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